This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

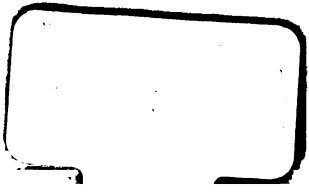
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



NIH
LIBRARY

THE BUNCH OF GRAPES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"LITTLE JOE AND HIS STRAWBERRY PLANT,"
"NORMAN AND ADA," "DONALD'S HAMPER," "WAY TO BE HAPPY,"
"LITTLE CHARLOTTE'S HOME."

PHILADELPHIA:
J. P. SKELLY & CO.,
NO. 21 SOUTH SEVENTH STREET,
(Second Floor.)
1868.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
254506B
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1943 L

STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED
BY ALFRED MARTIEN.

Contents.

I.

PAGE.

CAVALIERS AND ROUNDHEADS 5

II.

THE CONFLICT 19

III.

THE DESOLATED COTTAGE 40

IV.

UNEXPECTED VISITORS 56

THE BUNCH OF GRAPES.

I.

CAVALIERS AND ROUNDHEADS.

"MOTHER! do look, what a big carriage! Oh, what splendid big horses! how many are there, I wonder?—one, two, three! How heavy the carriage must be to want so many horses, and how nice it must be to ride in a carriage drawn by three horses! don't you think so, mother?"

"Very nice indeed; but Margery,

my child, you seem idle this afternoon, have you nothing to do?".

"No, mother, nothing; I have really done all my work, and it is so nice to stand here and watch all the funny things coming along the road. See there, what a queer old man that is? I do not like his horse, it is stupid, and goes so slowly. Oh, mother, if I had a horse I would go so fast; there can be no fun in riding unless one goes very quickly."

"Your horse need not go any faster than your tongue does, Margery," said the widow, smiling, "you are a sad chatterbox, child."

"Oh, mother, I like to talk, and it does nobody any harm; but, oh,

you must really stop your wheel, and come and look at this flock of sheep. Mother! mother! are they not beautifully clean? they look as if they had just been washed. And what a nice dog the shepherd has; he has quite a kind face,—I do wish I had a dog like that."

The widow got up from her seat by the cottage door, and came and stood by her child to see the flock of sheep go by.

"Pretty creatures!" she said; "I like a deal better to see them than so many of the things that have been past here lately. Guns, and horses, and soldiers, and such things, are but sorry sight, and give one

many a heartache when one thinks of all the dreadful work they are going to do. I don't know much about such things, I am thankful to say, and for the matter of that, I think the less one knows the better; but for those guns, I do think they are right wicked things, I am sure. But come away from the gate, child, you will be smothered in the dust. How bad the roads are this summer; I wish some rain would come and lay the dust: but there is no use wishing, for if I begin I shall never end."

"I know where you'd begin, and where you'd end too, mother," said Margery, looking thoughtful.

"Do you? then you're wiser than

I am, child," replied her mother; "times are so bad, there's plenty to wish for."

"Aye, but, mother, you know folks always say it's all owing to the dreadful war; and you yourself always say it's peace and nothing else we want."

"True enough, and we shall wait many a long day before we get it, I fear; that king of ours can't be good for much, from all I hear, or he'd do something to put an end to this wicked war. For wicked sure it is, if ever a war was wicked,—brother fighting against brother, Englishmen against Englishmen, and all for nothing, but because

King Charles wants to have more than his due,—at least, so folks say. I care little which gets the best of it, King or Parliament, if only we have peace, and I reckon there are many poor people shut up in the town of Gloucester who would be as glad as I to hear some talk of peace."

"Gladder still, mother, I should think," said little Margery. "Oh, I am glad we don't live there, as you used to do when you first married father. Nobody will come and fight against this little cottage; will they, mother?"

"No, no, child, to be sure," said the widow, as she marked the anxious look on her child's face.

Yes, there were many strange, sad lines on her little face already, for had not she often been kept awake many nights together with dreadful rumors of coming trouble and sorrow; and when she slept, did she not always dream of burning houses, and guns firing, and dreadful men with helmets on their heads, and naked swords in their hands?

For little Margery's home lay close to the broad highway, not more than five miles from the city of Gloucester, which, as her mother had said, was closely besieged by the King's troops. She loved her little home, with its pretty garden inclosed by a stone wall, its porch on

which hung, in rich festoons, a luxuriant vine. She liked to sit under the old plum-tree in the middle of the garden while her mother was spinning in the porch, and watch all that passed that way; and now, on this glorious afternoon in August, 1643, there was so much to be seen,—so many things passing by, that Margery was in all her glory.

An hour or more had passed away, and many more travellers had attracted Margery's eager eye, and been watched along the road. Then for some time the smooth highway was perfectly quiet, and there was nothing to be seen but a lazy pig which had strolled out for

an afternoon's walk, and a few birds which hopped about and chirruped under the trees.

Margery got tired, and sitting down with her back to the gate, she began to plait some broad blades of grass together for a collar for the cat.

"I declare, what a cloud of dust!" exclaimed the widow, as, looking up from her work, she perceived a troop of mounted soldiers galloping along the road. "Run in, Margery, child, out of the way of those rough men;" and the child, ever ready to take alarm, obeyed.

But the widow lingered, for surely the soldiers were drawing rein before

her door; yes, their leader cries "Halt!" what can they want?

"Good woman," shouts the captain, "can you find us anything to drink,—any good ale, such as will put a little life into us this broiling day? I and my comrades have ridden hard and are hot and thirsty."

"I've fresh spring water, sir, nothing better; last month I had sweet milk, but deary me, some of the King's army have driven away my cow, and I am forced to do with water."

"Well, your cow's gone to serve the King, you ought to be proud to give her up to his Majesty; and as

for the water, it will be better than nothing. Dismount, fellows, do you hear?"

The troop gladly obeyed, and crowded around the garden gate, while the widow hastened to draw some water from the well behind the cottage.

Little Margery had crept shyly out when the rough Cavaliers entered the garden, and now, at her mother's bidding, was busy filling her little apron with ripe plums from the tree before the window.

"Take them in to the gentleman, child," said her mother, as she saw the little one looking doubtfully at the tall officer, with his plumed

hat and jingling spurs, and Margery crept timidly to his side and offered her treasures.

"Come, thou art a good little maid, and hast a pretty little face of thine own; many thanks. Come, sit on my knee and tell me thy name. What, afraid! nobody must be afraid of anything now-a-days. I'll give thee a ride on my horse; thou'lt like that, I know."

That great war-horse, Margery hardly knew herself on his back; but she was safe enough, for the captain's hand was holding her, and the great black horse, having looked round once to see what strange little creature he had got on his back,

seemed to understand it perfectly, and was steady and well-behaved.

By-and-bye, the soldiers having quenched their thirst, the captain lifts little Margery down, and calls "To horse!" The soldiers are soon in their saddles and impatient to be off. But Captain Waldron had a generous heart, and though money was scarce with him just now, he would not go till he had paid his kind hostess richly, as she thought, for her entertainment. He asked Margery to give him one of the beautiful white roses which grew against the wall of the cottage; and then, with a kiss, which Margery hardly relished from those bearded

lips, the merry captain mounted and rode away.

For many a day after this the little one prattled of the tall knight and his splendid horse, and wondered whether he would ever come back again. But the widow shook her head, and said she hoped not; it made her shake all over to see such rough soldiers walking in and out of her little garden, just as if it were all their own; and Margery, too, began to tremble when she remembered how sharp the swords looked, and how many guns they had.

II.

THE CONFLICT.

IN the meantime Gloucester was still besieged by the King; some said the garrison was getting worn out, and that they must give in at last. Others said no, the Parliamentary generals would be sure to come to their relief; but September came, and as yet the succor had not arrived.

One afternoon the widow and Margery were in their accustomed

places, the former spinning by the cottage-door, the latter acting sentinel at the little gate, and looking down the road.

"What is that creaking noise, my child?" asked the widow, as a distant sound caught her ear; "is there anything to be seen? your young eyes are better than mine; besides, the vine has grown so thick over the porch that I cannot see through it."

"Yes, mother, there is something coming, but I can't make out what it is; I don't think it's a wagon, and yet it is not a carriage. O, mother, is it some more of those horrid things? It must be, for, there are hosts and hosts of soldiers too."

The widow hastened to the gate just as several large guns, drawn by long lines of horses, began slowly to ascend the sloping ground which led past her cottage.

"They are going to the town," she said, quietly, as little Margery pressed close to her, and slipped her little hand within her's for protection; "they will do us no harm, my child; they have other work in hand. Oh, when will this dreadful war be over!"

"But, mother, I wish they would not come this way," said the child, half crying. "I don't like to think they are going to kill men—real men; and they look so cross and bad

too. Look, mother, that one is looking this way! Oh, I hope they will not want any water this time!"

"Hush, hush, child! Run into the house if you are frightened, and keep out of the way.—Yes, yes, I will come too if you like;" for Margery was clinging to her, and looking more frightened than her mother had ever seen her.

They went in and shut the door. But soon a loud trampling, which seemed to come from the opposite direction, brought the widow to the window, from which she could see something of what was passing on the road.

At first she could see nothing but

a rapidly increasing cloud of dust, then that dispersed, and, with clashing arms and rushing horses, a squadron of mounted Cavaliers dash along the road towards the party which is conducting the guns; and what happened next the widow would have found it hard to say. Roundheads and Cavaliers were mingled together around the object of contention—the heavy guns. Widow Joist's eyes were almost blinded by the flashing of the bright steel, and the clouds of smoke and dust; but through it all she could plainly discover in the fiery officer who led the Royalist troops her late visitor, Captain Waldron.

"Oh, Margery, child," she exclaimed, in terror, as she saw some of the Roundheads burst into her little garden, and, placing themselves on the ground, begin firing at their enemies from behind the stone wall, "we cannot stay here; we must fly to the woods, and live under the trees to-night; I dare not stay here,"—and seizing the half-fainting child by the hand, she hurried as fast as her limbs would carry her through the back door, and over a wide pasture to a neighboring wood, where, not daring to stop till she had reached the deepest and thickest part, she at last sunk down, overcome with fatigue and fright.

There we must leave her for a little while, and go back to the deserted cottage, where the struggle continued for some time without any decided advantage on either side. At last some of the Cavaliers, headed by their impetuous officer, leap their horses over the low wall, and begun cutting down the musketeers, whose murderous fire had been doing so much mischief in their ranks.

What a scene of desolation that little garden has become in the space of a few minutes! But now the fight becomes less desperate. The captain's arm is broken by one shot, and his horse being killed by

another, he falls to the ground, and lies there stunned by the fall. His men, seeing him fall, waver, and, before long, begin to fly in all directions. The Roundheads watch them for a time, and then resume their road towards Gloucester; and the captain is left alone.

Many hours passed away, the sun went down, and one by one the stars came out, while the moon threw her cold, silvery light on the deserted cottage, and on that pale, still form, lying close to the porch.

The cool night air fanned his temples, and slowly consciousness came back to the wounded man. He tried to raise his head, but a

heavy weight seemed to pull him down again; and he sank back with a heavy groan. By degrees he recalled the events of the day—the delight with which he had accepted the task of intercepting the relieving party when sent out that morning, his fiery charge and desperate struggle, his wound, and, as he now feared, the failure of his attempt.

"All lost!" he murmured, "all hope of fame and glory! for where I am I have not the least conception, and this raging thirst is killing me: the pain in my arm, too; I believe it's broken."

Once more he tried to rise, but sank back helplessly. As he did so

he felt something cold touch his burning forehead; but the moon had gone down, and there was not light enough to discover what it was.

Slowly and painfully the hours passed away, and the first blue streaks of light appeared on the horizon. Captain Waldron was barely conscious enough to notice them; but they enabled him to discover that the cold thing which had touched his face was a loose branch of the vine which overhung the porch, and that this very branch was loaded with several clusters of ripe grapes.

"The very thing!" he exclaimed, as, forgetting all about his wound,

he made a desperate effort to reach and gather them.

"No use," he groaned, as his fingers only succeeded in grasping a small bunch of leaves, and he fell groaning to the ground, while the blood began to flow afresh from the broken arm. "I must be content to lie here and die of thirst, I suppose; there seems no help for it."

But though he said so, it was not in Captain Waldron's nature to lie passive and contented under suffering. He moaned and writhed continually, though every movement only served to increase his pain. Again and again he tried to raise himself, though every time he failed.

He declared he would give it up; he was done for and might as well die quietly.

All at once a little voice fell on his ear; he knew it at once, and the sound brought before his mind's eye that merry little child he had played with three weeks before. Then he remembered what he had not noticed before, that it was the same cottage, for in the excitement and confusion of the skirmish he had not taken any note of the place.

But how different was little Margery now from the bright, laughing child he had seen her! The dreadful scene of the day before had made her little face look white and sad,

and now the sight of her ruined home had filled her with grief. The night in the dark wood had frightened her sadly, and she had gladly obeyed her mother's call to go with her and look at their home again.

The sound of fighting had long ceased and little Margery had fancied she should see nothing more of the dreadful soldiers and their guns. What was then her horror as she entered the little garden, to see several still forms lying on the grass, whose pallid countenances made her shudder and grow cold with awe, for never before had she seen any one look like that!

"Please let us go away again,

mother," she cried, casting a terrified look around her. "Oh, it is dreadful here! Are they all dead —all?"

The widow, scarcely less frightened than Margery, did not answer; but another voice was heard—it came from the cottage porch, and feebly called for help. Captain Waldron raised his head, and the widow hastened to him, followed by Margery, who carefully averted her eyes from those other faces, whose lips would never move again, and then stood by her mother's side, holding her gown, while she examined his wound, and tried to make him more comfortable.

"I must bind it up," said the widow, as the patient winced under her gentle handling. "Margery, child, take off your apron."

The little one obeyed; and very carefully the wounded arm was bound up. Then the widow went after some water, and the Captain asked Margery to give him a few of the grapes. Margery gathered a fine cluster, but he seemed too weak to take them, so she pulled them from the stalk, and put them one by one into his mouth, while he lay still exhausted by pain. But when he had drunk the water and eaten the grapes he seemed a little revived, and, turning to the widow, said,—

"You find your home in a sorry condition, my good friend, and I am grieved it should have been our handiwork; but these are the chances of war, and I have no doubt you rejoice to think you are suffering in such a glorious cause."

The widow was silent; in truth she knew little of either cause, and her only thought now was, that her little cottage was almost in ruins, the thatch half burnt off, and the windows broken; and how she was to live there was a mystery that remained to be solved. But she said nothing of this to the captain; and he began to doubt whether he had not fallen into the hands of a

Roundhead who might deliver him up to his enemies. It seemed impossible to him that any one could be indifferent on the subject; and yet the widow's thoughts were evidently entirely given to her lost possessions, without concerning herself in the least about the defeat of the King's forces.

He felt half angry with her for the silence with which she listened to his lamentations over the failure of his expedition; but at the same time she was so attentive to him, so anxious to ease his pain as much as she could, that he could not but feel grateful to her.

Toward midday, a few stragglers

of Captain Waldron's troop appeared. They had come to bury the dead, and a surgeon came with them to attend to any that might be yet alive and needing help.

The wounded officer was now lifted up, carried into the cottage, and laid on the widow's little bed. He groaned terribly while they were moving him, and the surgeon was setting his arm, so that little Margery was forced to run out of the cottage and into the field, that she might not hear his moans, for her little heart was almost bursting. Never in her life before had she seen so much trouble and pain.

When she came back the soldiers

had made the garden look rather more as it used to do. They had removed the dead bodies of their comrades, and were digging one large grave, not far off, to receive them all. Then, rough soldiers though they were, they seemed grieved at the destruction they had caused in the widow's little domain, and anxious to do something to repair it.

They gazed ruefully at the half-burnt thatch, and said they could do nothing to mend that; the broken windows, too, seemed to puzzle them nearly as much; but when little Margery came creeping back, and began to look mournfully at

the uprooted rose-trees and broken vine, which was hanging in straggling festoons over the door and on the path, they set to work vigorously to smooth down the scattered earth, and restore the garden to something like its wonted order.

And Margery watched them, giving her orders like a little queen, taking it for granted that they were merely doing their duty in trying to remedy the mischief which they had done; which view of the subject was entirely new to them, and did not exactly coincide with their sentiments.

They were eager to finish their task and get away; so when that

large grave by the roadside was filled in, and the surgeon had decided that the captain must stay where he was for the present, they mounted their horses and rode away.

III.

THE DESOLATED COTTAGE.

MARGERY stood at the cottage door by her mother's side as they took their departure, watching till they were out of sight; then, looking up in the widow's face, she gave free vent to some of the feelings which had been making her feel so very angry all day, that, as she expressed it, she really did not know what to do with herself.

"Such bad, wicked men, mother, to come fighting in our garden, and

She was looking at the broken windows. Pag

setting our house on fire. I am sure they did it on purpose; they ought to be hanged, so they ought."

Widow Joist did not answer; she was looking at the broken windows and the burnt thatch, and wondering what she could do to keep her patient from feeling the night air through all the numerous openings.

But Margery would have an answer.

"Mother," she said again, impatiently, "they ought to mend the roof; see, the rain will come in, and what shall we do then?"

"I don't know, Margery; I don't quite see what we are to do; I'm ...ing, my child. By-and-by per-

haps mother will be rich enough to have it mended; but we must have patience, there are many people much worse off than we are."

"Worse off than we are? O, mother!" said Margery, who like many older than herself, had found it a great comfort to think that there never was any one so unhappy as she had a right to be under the circumstances.

"Much worse off, child," repeated the widow; "why many a poor child has lost its father and its home too, and been left to roam like a beggar about the country. You, Margery, have got a home still, and though it isn't so nice as it was, yet

the Lord watches over it and us, and He will provide."

"I wish He wouldn't let them fight and kill each other in our garden," sobbed the child; "I can't bear to think of it."

"Then we won't think of it, child; where's the use? Come dry your eyes, and be a brave child."

"And what am I to do mother? where am I to sleep? The captain has got our bed."

"Surely you wouldn't grudge it to him, Margery," said the widow; "you can sleep easily any where, while I doubt if he'll get much sleep even in our bed."

"He oughtn't to fight, and then

he wouldn't get hurt," answered Margery, rubbing her eyes very hard. Then seeing her mother's grieved look, she began to cry afresh, and sobbed out, "I can't help it, mother, it is so very hard."

"Aye, aye," said the widow, "I make no doubt it does seem hard to you; but better times are coming! I heard the captain in there say to the gentleman who was doing up his arm that there was no doubt at all but the King would get the best of it, and then things would be put right again. I think, as he said, that everything seems to have turned topsy-turvy lately, and that's the reason times have been so hard."

"And when they turn right again, mother, will the roof be mended, do you think?"

"Yes, sure, child, I shouldn't say things were right until it *was* mended. But I hope that may be done before the war's over, though I don't see quite how. It will take a deal of straw, and I don't see my way clear to paying for it."

"And the plum-tree is all broken too, mother; the soldiers said they thought it was done for, so we shall have no more plums."

"The vine is all right, Margery; and you like grapes better than plums, don't you?"

"O, yes! But I was thinking what would you do without the money you get every year for the plums?"

"We shall see, Margery; the plums were over for this year, and before next summer comes we shall have time to think about that. You will be getting a big girl, and must see what you can do to help your poor old mother."

"O, yes, mother, I will try! But what can you do with that officer? Will he soon get well and go away?"

"I hope so. We must go in, and see how he is. How quiet it seems now after all the noise yesterday!"

Captain Waldron was looking

eagerly for his hostess when they entered the cottage. The bandage on his arm was slipping, he was sure; and he was so thirsty that he could drink buckets-full of water. Margery opened her eyes very wide at this last assertion, and began to think that the well would not hold out very long if he kept his word. She was not very well acquainted with the captain as yet, and did not know what a restless, impatient invalid they had to nurse. In a few days she began to understand him better, and found out that he esteemed it the greatest possible misery to have to keep still, and was longing to get back to the camp.

She was greatly puzzled at this discovery. "Did he want to get his other arm and his legs broken?" she inquired, "or did he want to kill a lot more men?"

He told her that her last guess was the best, for he certainly could not say he particularly relished having a broken arm, and a broken leg would hardly be an improvement.

"You would like to kill some more men, then!" cried the child, indignantly. "Then you are a real wicked man,—the worst man I ever saw! I am sure you ought to be killed too!"

The captain laughed.

"Thank you, my little Margery, for your kind opinion of me; but you have forgotten that it is my business to fight, and therefore I should be a very lazy fellow if I preferred staying here and doing nothing."

Margery looked extremely puzzled, and not being able to answer this reasoning, contented herself with repeating very resolutely, "that it was wrong,—it was *horrid* to kill men!" adding, "How should you like to be killed yourself?"

"Very much, indeed," laughed the captain; "it would be so glorious to die for one's king and country."

But Margery's memory was too

well supplied with his complaints and lamentations for her to credit this assertion.

This was not the only discussion they had on the subject. Margery often returned to the charge, till the captain told her he thought she must be very fond of him, since she was so anxious he should stay with them instead of going back to the war. To this the child replied that there was not room enough for him to live with them always, but she thought he might go and live somewhere else instead of going back to the camp; while she confided to her mother in private that "she should be very sorry indeed if he stayed

there, for as he was so fond of fighting and killing people he might take it into his head to kill them when he was well enough."

"No, no, Margery, he's not so bad as all that, child. I can't see that it's right to take away a fellow-creature's life, but some folks think it is, and maybe they are right; we'll hope they are, for there are a mighty number of folks who make it their business just now."

In due course of time Captain Waldron recovered sufficiently to return to the camp, and the widow and her little daughter were left to their usual quiet life. But before he left, the captain had thanked them

very warmly for their kind nursing, and said something about hoping he should be able to do something towards making the cottage more comfortable.

But for some days after his departure they heard nothing of him, and Widow Joist said "no doubt he had forgotten all about it now he had got back to his gay friends, for, though they were in such trouble, the King's folks seemed very gay people after all,—at least that was what she heard."

Meanwhile October was coming, and there would be cold winds,—and what would she and little Margery do when winter came? It

would be almost as bad as living out doors. Still the widow said, "God will provide!" and she tried to rest satisfied that He would fulfil His word to her and her fatherless child. Nor did He fail to do so. The month had not quite ended, when one day some workmen appeared at the little gate with straw and other things, and informed the poor widow they had come to make her house weather-tight. So, for a few days, there was thatching, and building, and mending, and a great deal of confusion and commotion, and then the men went away again, and the widow and her little daughter could again rejoice in a comfortable home.

Margery's opinion of the captain was greatly improved by this conclusion to his visit; and when, a few days after, a soldier from the camp drove a fine red cow up to the door, with a message from Captain Waldron that he was sorry he had not been able to get one sooner, her delight knew no bounds, and she sent so many messages to the captain in return that the man declared he could not remember half of them.

The cow was comfortably installed in the premises of her predecessor, and soon grew quite at home; and thus a heavy weight was lifted off the widow's heart,

and she looked forward to the coming winter with more hope than she had known for a long time.

IV.

UNEXPECTED VISITORS.

LONG years passed away, and many changes had taken place. The King, whose misrule had been the cause of so much bloodshed, had met a violent death; Cromwell, too, had gone to his grave; and now Charles II. had ascended his father's throne. And what of the widow and Margery? Eighteen years had wrought a great change in them. The widow's brow was wrinkled, and

her form growing stiff and bent; while Margery has grown from a chattering child into a very steady, quiet young woman of four-and-twenty.

Everybody liked Margery, and no wonder, for she was a kind friend to all who were in any trouble; and then, too, she was such a good daughter to her mother! So when it came out that Margery was to be married to an industrious young man, who, after having served in General Monk's army, was now about to settle down to more peaceful employment, everybody rejoiced, and said they were glad to hear it, for if any one

deserved to have a good husband they were sure she did. The widow received many congratulations from her neighbors, but she gave the same answer to all,—

"Well, I think I've more cause to be sorry, for she's been a good daughter to me; and now I am growing old, and want some one to take care of me, I shall feel sadly lost without my Margery."

And then the tears would come into Margery's eyes, and she would declare that she would not marry for ever so long, till her mother laughed at her, and said she was only in fun; she should get on very well indeed without her, and

should die all the happier for thinking her darling was so well taken care of, and so well provided for.

A few days before the marriage was to take place, the widow and Margery were spending the evening in their old place in the cottage-porch—that place where they had sat so many years ago, and watched soldiers pass to and from the besieged city of Gloucester. Margery was thinking of those days as she sat on a low stool by her mother, with her head resting on her hand, and her eyes fixed on the distant landscape, with a vacant look very unusual to her,

for she was generally busy and active, and seldom to be seen sitting idle till late in the day.

"You are tired, child," said the widow; "you have been working too long in the sun to-day; you must go to bed earlier, or we shall have you laid up, and there'll be a fine business."

"No, mother, I'm not particularly tired," said the girl, springing up, and jumping on her stool to fasten back a loose piece of the old vine, which had caught the locks of her hair, and made her smooth tresses untidy. "I'm not tired; I'm only lazy."

"Lazy!" said the old woman;

"that's a new thing for you: but sit down and be lazy, child, if you like; you've a busy life before you, I'll be bound."

"I hope so, I'm sure, mother; I'm used to work, and I shouldn't know what to do without it. But, mother, will you walk a bit down the road this evening; it is getting cool now, and will be pleasant."

Her mother agreed, and they strolled slowly along by the side of the broad highway. Margery paused, as she often did, by the large grassy mound not far from their gate, which reminded her so strongly of that "dreadful day," as she still called it. She had

never ventured to tread on that grassy mound even in her childish games, for though it was such a rude grave, she could not forget that it covered the bodies of those poor men whom she had seen lying cold and dead at her own door; and often and often since then had her imagination pictured their weeping wives and children looking for their return, and looking always in vain.

"I wonder what has become of your friend, the poor captain, Margery," said the widow, as they turned to go back to the cottage; "perhaps he, too, lies buried in some such grave as that."

"Well, he had no wife or children," answered Margery; "no one to miss him—nobody who cared very much for him. He was better off than those poor fellows."

"How do you know that, dear?" inquired her mother.

"Why, mother, don't you remember he told you he had no home?—all his family were scattered to the four winds, and that the camp was his home?"

"I had forgotten," said the widow, smiling; "my memory is not so good as your's. But supposing he had no wife, how do you know the poor creatures who are buried here had any?"

"Oh, mother, some of them were greyheaded men, and the soldiers who came to bury them said something about their wives."

"Well, child, you have a good memory, to be sure; I could not remember what people said nearly twenty years ago."

"I shan't forget that day if I live a hundred years," said Margery, in a low voice: then, as they reached the gate, she added, "We had better go in now, mother; there are some travellers riding along the road, and we shall be smothered with dust."

"Aye, the road's dusty indeed; it always is this time of year,

unless we have a deal of rain, and then the wind is worse. Shut the gate, Margery. What grand folks those be, to be sure!"

This was said as the travellers approached the cottage; the party consisted of a lady and gentleman, and a blooming little girl, on a pillion, behind her father, and two servants, also mounted. They had been riding fast, but, as they approached, the gentleman drew his rein, and, standing up in his stirrups, looked around him. He was evidently puzzled, and put his hand to his forehead, as if trying to remember something, then he suddenly exclaimed,—

"I can't remember; I think it looks like the place, but I fancied it was further along the road. I had no idea it was so far from the town."

"Oh, in one's young days time flies very quickly, Henry," said the lady, smiling; "no doubt it was further than you thought. But what was the old woman's name?"

"I haven't the faintest idea in the world. The child's name was Margery; but there may be a dozen Margeries here about—names generally run in places."

"There is a girl standing by the porch," suggested the lady;

"had you not better dismount, and make a few inquiries; it is getting late, and it must be some miles further to the town, which you must not forget we have to reach to-night."

The gentleman dismounted, and laid his hand on the little gate to try and open it, just as Margery, seeing him approach, came forward to meet him.

One glance told her that that strange, sunburnt gentleman before her was her old friend Captain, or as he was now called, Sir Henry Waldron; but seeing that he did not recognise her, she merely inquired what she could do for him,

at the same time opening the gate to let him in.

He looked hard at her, but not being able to trace any resemblance in her to his rosy, chubby little playfellow, he began his inquiries by asking whether there were any other cottages near there, as he was looking for an old friend who he thought used to live somewhere thereabouts with her little daughter, though whether they were now alive or dead he really could not say.

"I think it must be my mother you are wanting, sir," said Margery, blushing up to the roots of her hair, "she has lived here a long time:"

and, hesitating and blushing still more, she added, "and I think, sir, you once stayed in our cottage."

The captain, or Sir Henry, as we ought to call him, looked hard at her, rubbed his forehead, and said,—

"Impossible! you are not little Margery, I am sure; true, it's near upon twenty years since I was here, but I must say I can't see the very faintest resemblance. What do you think you remember me after all these years?" he inquired, as he remarked the very assured look with which she regarded him.

"I am quite sure I do, sir; and you are not much changed, I think.

Shall I call my mother, she is in the cottage?"

"Do; she, at least, will not be so much changed. But somehow the cottage looks so different; surely it has been changed. If I remember rightly, one could not see it so plainly from the road."

"The old plum-tree is gone sir—that makes some difference; and some of the old apple-trees have been cut down, too. But won't you walk in?"

"Thank you, I will help my wife to dismount, while you find your mother, and announce her very unexpected visitor."

The widow received the news

without showing much astonishment.

"We were just speaking of him, Margery, you know, child; so it's nothing very astonishing that he should come to see. But anyhow it's the right thing; we took care of him in his trouble, and he has not forgotten it, you see."

She hastened to remove her spinning-wheel from the porch where she had left it, and opened the door wide to admit her visitors. Both she and Margery felt a little shy of the stranger lady, and would have been better pleased to see their old friend alone.

But Lady Waldron was so kind

and gentle she soon won their hearts, and the little girl was so pretty that Margery could hardly take her eyes off her. She wondered how it was that she was so much like her father, whom the young girl had always considered the very personification of everything terrible, and yet be at the same time so soft and gentle.

And then she looked at Sir Henry, to trace the likeness again; years of war and wandering had made many lines on his face, but Margery could not help thinking they had also added to it some pleasant lines too. His eye was dark and piercing as of old; but every now and then it seemed to

soften as he turned to his wife and child, or spoke to the old widow. Altogether Margery felt much more inclined to like the rough, loud-voiced captain than she had done in bygone years.

She listened while he told how, after the battle of Worcester, he had gone abroad, "feeling sure that he was safer out of the country than in it, since he for one could never make court to that upstart Cromwell,"—how he had lived on the Continent, first in France and then in the Netherlands,—how he had married and had several children, two of whom had died in their infancy; and as he said so,

Margery thought to herself that doubtless trouble had softened that rough spirit: but again he went on to tell of the little court Charles II. had held in his exile, its gaieties and frivolities, and when she heard these tales she thought he seemed again the thoughtless, careless soldier he used to be. So she turned to see what she could do to amuse the little girl, who was making herself quite at home playing with the old cat.

The child was very willing to be friendly, and when Sir Henry said that he really must beg for a few grapes from the vine for the sake of old times, she declared

she would go with Margery to gather them. And then, when she found that the cow in the meadow belonged to the widow, little Lucy begged she might go and see it; so Margery brought a mug, and gave her some warm milk to drink, which greatly delighted her. For little Lucy having been born and lived all her life in large cities, these common country sights were quite new and strange to her.

"I must tell papa about the cow," she said, as she held the plate which Margery was filling with clusters of grapes; "he would like to see her milked too."

"Is it my cow, Margery?" inquired Sir Henry, when his little girl had told him about it. "No, hardly; for I don't think it was quite a young one when you had her."

"Oh, no, your honor, the old cow died three or four years ago; but this one was her calf, and a real beauty she is too, I must say!"

"Oh, yes, papa, she is red all over, with only a little white on her face: I never saw such a beautiful cow!"

"Like her mother," said Sir Henry. "But, Margery, I am glad to hear from your mother that

you have quite got over your dislike to the military profession, and think it altogether a most laudable calling."

Margery looked bewildered

"Indeed, sir, I don't know at all what my mother has been telling you, but I don't think I have changed my mind much about it. I'm sure if I were a man I'd never be a soldier, even to save my life."

Sir Henry laughed.

"And yet," he said, "your mother tells us that you have promised to become a soldier's wife, which I should think is almost the same thing as being a soldier oneself, isn't it?"

"Oh, sir, but Mark Lowdel is not a soldier now,—he is working on Farmer Robinson's farm! I'm sure he won't go to the wars any more, for he hates them as much as I do."

"Left the army, eh? Well, I think it was worth while, to get such a good, sensible wife. You see your mother's been sounding your praises while you were in the meadow with Lucy, and we are beginning to wonder what she will do without you."

"We shall not be far off, sir," answered Margery, coloring deeply at Sir Henry's praises. "My mother cannot bear to leave the old

cottage, or we should be glad indeed to have her with us, and we can't be here because it is so far from Mark's work."

"I say better leave the young folks to themselves," interrupted the widow. "By-and-bye, when I'm too old to manage for myself, mayhap I'll go and live with them; but for a bit I'll bide in the old place."

"I think you are right," said Lady Waldron, gently; "but you will feel lonely at first."

"Aye, yes, my lady, very like I shall; but the good Lord Jesus will be with me, and sure, you know, we can't have better com-

2545061

pany than He! And what if I be a bit scared at nights, though I don't see 'em, there are hosts of his bright angels encamping round about me, keeping me from harm!"

Lady Waldron was silent, but her husband said,—

"Then I promise you you're better off for sentinels than many who sleep in much richer beds than ever you did. I question whether the King himself is better guarded, Widow Joist."

Soon after the travellers took their leave, and mounting their horses were soon on their way to Gloucester, their resting-place

for the night. But before they left, Captain Waldron said that if all was well he hoped that they should hear from him again; and if he was ever in that part of the world they might be sure he should come and see them. The widow and Margery watched them till they were out of sight, and then returned to the cottage to talk over what had certainly been a great event in their quiet life.

A few days after—it was the morning of Margery's wedding-day—a man presented himself at the cottage-door, and inquired where one Mark Lowdel lived; and when

the widow had directed him to the cottage of her future son-in-law, he continued,—

"Maybe you know the name of Sir Henry Waldron? Well, I have orders from him to send a young cow that he bought of me to the premises of this Mark Lowdel, and if I mistake not he said something about your daughter; what it was I can't rightly say, but from what the folks hereabout say I take it he meant the cow for her, as he was particular it should come to-day."

"To-day! Well, to be sure, I do wonder a gentleman like him should remember it's my child's

wedding-day; it's true he did seem to take a marvellous interest in her altogether. I wonder why. We did nothing more for him than any Christian would have done, or ought to have done. I fear me he's not so grateful by half to the good God who has preserved him through so many dangers, and brought him home again from his wanderings."

"Oh, as for that," replied the man, "I don't know much about such things; but I've heard folks say as how his troubles have done him a mighty deal of good—leastways he's much kinder to his people than he used to be, and that, I

suppose, you'll think a change for the better."

"To be sure," replied the widow; "but himself; is he as proud and hasty as he used to be?"

"Well, as I said before, I don't know much about such things; but he's very good to his servants and very fair in all his dealings with me; and I've had a good deal to do with him, buying and selling, since he came back to this country, and that's what I think most about."

The widow shook her head; she had learned from the Bible all the little knowledge she possessed, and in it she read that though a man may sell all his goods to feed the poor,

though he may have all the gifts and talents in the world, yet if he has not the true charity which began with love to God, he is nothing. And so she shook her head at her friend's reasoning, and said,—

"I pray God that he may have a changed heart, nought else will serve him much in the day of Christ's appearing; and I would dearly like to meet him on the right hand of the Judge on that day."

THE END.

APR I 7 1944